

USE NOTE DATE



Washington 25, D.C.

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ED FOR RELEASE
TIL 6:30 P.M. (EDT)
SUNDAY, JUNE 16, 1962

1497

NO. 980-62

OXFORD 53201-53176

REMARKS OF
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT S. McNAMARA
AT THE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN
SATURDAY, JUNE 16, 1962

(as released, not as given)

I am glad to be home, and I am particularly glad to be here for a diversity occasion. For this University gives meaning and focus to life in Ann Arbor -- even for those who are not privileged to be associated with it directly -- as the academic community serves to clarify the objectives and focus the energies of the Free World.

President Kennedy aptly described the function of the university when he said: "The pursuit of knowledge ... rests ... on the idea of a world based on diversity, self-determination, and freedom. And that is the kind of world to which we Americans, as a nation, are committed by the principles upon which the great Republic was founded.

When men conduct the pursuit of knowledge, they create a world which freely unites national diversity and international partnership."

Commencement orators like to point to the fact that what we celebrate here is not an end, but a beginning. I prefer to take my view from another aspect of the occasion which we are observing today. The ancient formula for the award of academic degrees reminds you

of a long-established community, whether it be the fellowship of educated men, or the ancient and honorable company of scholars, of which you are the newest members. This community embodies the

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highest ideals of the Free World. Its membership includes people of every race, color, and creed. They share a common language, the language of ideas. They are dedicated to the fullest possible development of the individual human potential. And the only requirement for admission is a demonstrated capacity for and commitment to the use of one's powers of reason.

What I want to talk to you about here today are some of the concrete problems of maintaining a free community in the world today. I am to talk to you particularly about the problems of the community that bind together the United States and the countries of Western Europe.

Europe is the source of many of our traditions. One of these is the tradition of the university, which we can trace back to the groves of Academe, on the same site where only a few weeks ago the foreign ministers and ministers of defense of the European nations and the United States met to discuss their common problems.

I need scarcely remind you that Europe is one of the great sources of the American idea of freedom, and that it was the European philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who shaped the thinking of our own founding fathers. For all of us, Europe has been our teacher since we first learned to read.

One of the most impressive lessons that Europe has provided us recently is the lesson of her revival from the ashes of destruction at the end of the Second World War. The national economies of Europe were almost at standstill 15 years ago. Their capital plant was largely destroyed, either directly by bombing, or indirectly by years of neglect and patchwork repair. The people were exhausted by six years of war,

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and a large part of the most productive age group had been wiped out. Yet in the last 10 years, they have managed to increase the production of steel and electricity by over 130 percent each, and this has been typical of the recovery pattern.

The pump-priming help of the American Marshall Plan came at a crucial time in the process of European recovery. But the genius of the plan as envisaged by men like George Marshall and Harry Truman, was to help the Europeans help themselves.

At the same time that the nations of Europe were rebuilding at home, they were going through the difficult and often painful process of re-establishing their relationships with the peoples of Africa and Asia, no longer as a master and servant, but as members of the human race, all equally entitled to develop their individual capabilities. This process of change is by no means complete, and there are still difficult times ahead. But the joint achievement of Europe and its former colonies in revising their relations with each other is at least as impressive as the economic recovery of Europe itself.

What may be the greatest post-war European achievement is still in the making. The nations of Europe have begun to level the outmoded barriers that confined their individual economies within national boundaries. As Jean Monnet, the principal architect of the new Europe put it,

"An entirely new situation has been created in the world, simply by siding six countries together. It's not an addition; in fact, it's a multiplication. You multiply the capabilities of the countries you unite. A dynamic process is beginning that is changing the face of Europe and the role of Europeans in the world."

The making of Europe has only begun, and indeed it is perhaps at its most critical stage. But we should not overlook the fact that French coal and German steel now move freely across the continent, and that German refrigerators and Italian shoes are being sold increasingly without restriction in Belgian department stores.

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All of these achievements have been accomplished under pressure from dynamic forces which make a rational organization of human society increasingly difficult both for the Europeans and for ourselves. Let me mention some of these forces.

We are confronted with a population explosion resulting from our success in coping with disease and abnormalities, and by now threatening to double the earth's population by the end of this century. Unless we can control the explosion in the poor and resource-limited countries, the effects of economic growth may be canceled out by population growth, and intensifying expectations, particularly in the younger nations, may upset the delicate balance of political stability.

We are borne along by the accelerating pace of science and technology. In this country alone, new inventions are patented at a rate of 50,000 a year. The population of scientists and engineers has increased by more than 40 per cent in the last eight years. In fact, 50 per cent of all scientists and engineers who have lived throughout history are alive today.

We are faced with an extraordinary increase in the number of nations states. Since World War II, 100 nations have been formed. Each new nation expresses the natural right to self-determination and self-government. But their numbers complicate the problem of international diplomacy at the same time that military and economic developments increase our interdependence. Every nation is more and more directly affected by the internal situation of its neighbors, and the citizen has greater concern for the well-being of his neighbor.

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Lastly, we live in the shadow of the Sino-Soviet drive for world domination--surely not the only shadow on the world today, but one of the longest and deepest. By far, if it represents the most serious military force this nation has ever faced; by the exploitation of the entire world's troubles, it is a threat of a kind that is new to the world as the using technological power and population and national sovereignty themselves.

In the face of all these challenges, the ultimate objective of the free world is to establish a system of peaceful world order, based on the dignity of the individual and dedicated to the free development of each man's capacities. The members of the North Atlantic community -- the Europeans and ourselves -- bear a special responsibility to help achieve this objective. This responsibility derives from the strength of our internal institutions and the wealth of our material resources.

But we cannot hope to move toward our objective unless we move from strength. Part of that strength must be military strength. But I want to emphasize that we see our military strength not as the means of achieving the kind of world we seek, but as a shield to prevent any other nation from using its military strength, either directly or through threats and intimidation, to frustrate the aspirations we share with all the free peoples of the world. The aggressive use of military strength is foreign to the best traditions of the United States. And, as the President pointed out last week, "the basic problems facing the world today are not susceptible of final military solutions."

What the military component of our national power must do, and what I must see that it is capable of doing, is to assure the peoples of the Free World the freedom to live in their own way.

Yet the nature and extent of the military power base needed to meet the entire spectrum of challenges confronting the Free World is beyond the capacity of any single nation to provide. Since our own security cannot be separated from the security of the rest of the Free World, we necessarily rely on a series of alliances, the most important of which is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

NATO was born in 1949 out of the confrontation with the Soviet Union that ensued from the breakdown in relations between the former wartime allies. The Soviet Union had absorbed the states of eastern Europe into its own political framework, most dramatically with the Czechoslovakian coup of 1948. It had been fermenting insurrection in Greece, menacing Turkey, and encouraging the Communist parties in Western Europe to seize power in the wake of postwar economic disorder. The sharpest threat to Europe came with the first Berlin Crisis when the Russians attempted to blockade the western sectors of Berlin. Our response was immediate and positive. President Truman ordered a airlift for the isolated population of West Berlin which, in time, denied the Soviets their prize. The Marshall Plan, then in full swing, was assisting the economic recovery of the Western European nations. The Truman Doctrine brought our weight to bear in Greece and Turkey to prevent the erosion of independence.

But Western statesmen concluded that it would be necessary to secure the future and growth of the North Atlantic community with a more permanent arrangement for its defense. The effective defense of Western Europe could not be accomplished without a commitment of the United States to that defense in the long term. We made this commitment without hesitation. Arthur Goldberg, one of the chief architects of NATO, expressed the rationale of the organization in the Senate debate preceding passage of the treaty.

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"this is the logical evolution of one of our greatest American idioms, 'United we stand, Divided we fall.'"

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The North Atlantic Alliance is a unique alignment of governments. The decision for the common defense of the members has led to a remarkable degree of military collaboration and diplomatic consultation for a peace-condition. The growth of the alliance organization has accelerated the task of defending the treaty area and increased its scope, size and flexibility. N.A.T.O. has had its successes and setbacks, but it has weathered it all.

Today, N.A.T.O. is involved in a number of controversies, which must be resolved by achieving a consensus within the organization in order to preserve its strength and unity. The question has arisen whether Senator Udenberg's assertion is as true today as it was when he made it 13 years ago.

Three arguments have raised this question most sharply:

1. It has been argued that the increasing vulnerability of the U.S. to nuclear attack makes us less willing as a partner in the defense of Europe, and hence less effective in deterring such an attack.

2. It has been argued that nuclear capabilities are alone relevant in the age of the growing nuclear threat, and that independent national nuclear forces are sufficient to protect the nations of Europe.

I believe that all of these arguments are mistaken. I think it is timely to expose the U.S. views on these issues as we have presented them to our allies. In our view, the effect of the new factors in the international situation, both economic and military, has been to increase the interdependence of national security interests on both sides of the Atlantic, more

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to enhance the need for the closest coordination of our efforts.

A central military issue facing NATO today is the role of nuclear strategy. Four facts seem to us to dominate consideration of that role. All of them point in the direction of increased integration to achieve common defense. First, the Alliance has over-all nuclear strength adequate to any challenge confronting it. Second, this strength not only reduces the likelihood of major nuclear war, but makes possible a strategy designed to preserve the fabric of our societies if war should break out. Third, damage to the civil societies of the Alliance resulting from nuclear warfare could be very grave. Fourth, improved non-nuclear forces, well within Alliance resources, could enhance deterrence of any aggressive moves short of direct, all-out attack on Western Europe.

Let us look at the situation today. First, given the current balance of nuclear power, which we confidently expect to maintain in the years ahead, a surprise nuclear attack is simply not a rational act for any nation to consider. Nor would it be rational for an enemy to take the initiative in using nuclear weapons as an outgrowth of a limited engagement in Korea or elsewhere. I think we are entitled to conclude that either of these actions has been made highly unlikely.

Second, and equally important, the mere fact that no nation could actually take steps leading to a nuclear war does not guarantee that a nuclear war cannot take place. Not only do nations sometimes act in ways that are hard to explain on a rational basis, but even when acting "rationally" they sometimes, indeed disturbingly often, act on basis of misapprehension of the true facts of a situation. They

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misjudge the way others will react, and the way others will interpret what they are doing. We must hope, indeed I think we have good reason to hope, that all sides will understand this danger, and will refrain from steps that even raise the possibility of such a mutually disastrous misunderstanding. We have taken unilateral steps to reduce the likelihood of such an occurrence. We look forward to the prospect that through arms control, the actual use of these terrible weapons may be completely avoided. It is a problem not just for us in the West, but for all nations that are involved in this struggle we call the Cold War.

For our part, we feel we and our NATO allies must frame our strategy with this terrible contingency, however remote, in mind. Simply ignoring the problem is not going to make it go away.

The U. S. has come to the conclusion that to the extent feasible, basic military strategy in a possible general nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. That is to say, principal military objectives, in the event of a nuclear war stemming from a major attack on the Alliance, should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces, not of his civilian population.

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The very strength and nature of the Alliance forces make it possible for us to retain, even in the face of a massive surprise attack, sufficient reserve striking power to destroy an enemy society if driven to it. In other words, we are giving a possible opponent the strongest imaginable incentive to refrain from striking our own cities.

The strength that makes these contributions to deterrence and to the hope of deterring attack upon civil societies even in wartime does not come cheap. We are confident that our current nuclear programs are adequate and will continue to be adequate for as far into the future as we can reasonably foresee. During the coming fiscal year, the United States plans to spend close to \$15 billion on its nuclear weapons to assure their adequacy. For what this money buys, there is no substitute.

In particular, relatively weak national nuclear forces with enemy cities as their targets are not likely to be sufficient to perform even the function of deterrence. If they are small, and perhaps vulnerable on the ground or in the air, or inaccurate, a major antagonist can take a variety of measures to counter them. Indeed, if a major antagonist came to believe there was a substantial likelihood of it being used independently, this force would be inviting a pre-emptive first strike against it. In the event of war, the use of such a force against the cities of a major nuclear power would be tantamount to suicide, whereas its employment against significant military targets would have a negligible effect on the outcome of the conflict. Meanwhile, the creation of a single additional national nuclear force encourages the proliferation of nuclear power with all of its attendant dangers.

In short, then, limited nuclear capabilities, operating independently, are dangerous, expensive, prone to obsolescence, and lacking in credibility as a deterrent. Clearly, the United States' nuclear contribution to the Alliance is neither obsolete nor dispensable.

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the importance of unity of planning, concentration of executive authority, and central direction. There must not be competing and conflicting strategies to meet the contingency of nuclear war. We are convinced that a general nuclear war target system is inviolable, and if, despite all our efforts, nuclear war should occur, our best hope lies in conducting a centrally controlled campaign against all of the enemy's vital nuclear capabilities, while retaining reserve forces, all centrally controlled.

We know that the same forces which are targeted on ourselves are also targeted on our allies. Our own strategic retaliatory forces are prepared to respond against these forces, whenever they are and whatever their targets. This mission is assigned to us in fulfillment of our treaty commitments but also because the character of nuclear war compels it. More specifically, the U.S. is as much concerned with that portion of Soviet nuclear striking power that can reach Western Europe as with that portion that also can reach the United States. In short, we have undertaken the nuclear defense of NATO on a global basis. This will continue to be our objective. In the execution of this mission, the weapons in the European theater are only one resource among many.

There is, for example, the POLARIS force, which we have been substantially increasing, and which, because of its specially invulnerable nature, is peculiarly well suited to serve as a strategic reserve force. We have already announced the commitment of five of these ships, fully operational, to the NATO Command.

This sort of commitment has a corollary for the Alliance as a whole. We want and need a greater degree of Alliance participation in formulating nuclear weapons policy to the greatest extent possible. We would all find it intolerable to contemplate having only a part of the strategic force launched in isolation from our main striking power.

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We shall continue to maintain powerful nuclear forces for the Alliance as a whole. As the President has said, "Only through such strength can we be certain of deterring a nuclear strike, or an overwhelming ground attack, on our forces and allies."

But let us be quite clear about what we are saying and what we would have to face if the deterrent should fail. This is the almost certain prospect that, despite our nuclear strength, all of us would suffer deeply in the event of major nuclear war.

We accept our share of this responsibility within the Alliance. And we believe that the combination of our nuclear strength and a strategy of centralized response gives us the best chance of minimizing damage in the event that we have to fulfill our pledge. But I must point out that we do not regard this as a preferable prospect, nor do we believe that the Alliance should depend solely on our nuclear power to deter actions not involving a massive commitment of any hostile force. Surely the Alliance with the wealth, talent, and experience that we possess can find a better way than extreme reliance on nuclear weapons to meet our common threat. We do not believe that if the formula, stated, had not been discovered, we should still be committed to it. In this question, I can see no valid reason for a fundamental difference of view on the two sides of the Atlantic.

With the Alliance possessing the deterrent and the strategy I have described, it is most unlikely that any power will launch a nuclear attack on NATO. For the kind of conflicts, both political and military, most likely to arise in the NATO area, our capability for response must be limited to nuclear weapons alone. The Soviet nuclear superiority non-nuclear forces in Europe today. But their superiority is by no means overwhelming. Collectively, the Alliance has the potential for a

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successful defense against open forces. In manpower alone, NATO has more men under arms than the Soviet Union and its European satellites. We have already shown our willingness to contribute through our divisions now in place on European soil. In order to defend the populations of the NATO countries and to meet our treaty obligations, we have put in hand a series of measures to strengthen our non-nuclear power. We have added \$10 billion for this purpose to the previously agreed level of expenditures for fiscal years 1963 and 1965. To tide us over while permanent strength was being created, we called up 170,000 reservists. We will be releasing them this summer, but because in the meantime we have built up an enduring basis more added strength than the call-up temporarily gave us. The number of U. S. combat-ready divisions has been increased from 11 to 16. Stockpiled in Europe now are full sets of equipment for two additional divisions; the men of these divisions can be rapidly moved to Europe by air.

We expect that our allies will also undertake to strengthen further their non-nuclear forces, and to improve the quality and staying power of these forces. These achievements will complement our deterrent strength. With improvements in Alliance ground force strength and staying power, improved non-nuclear air capabilities, and better equipped and trained reserve forces, we can be assured that no deficiency exists in the NATO defense of this vital region, and that no aggression, small or large, can succeed.

I have described very briefly the United States' views on the role of nuclear forces in the strategy of the Alliance. I have pointed out that the Alliance necessarily depends, for the deterrence of general nuclear war, on the powerful and well protected nuclear forces of the United States, which are necessarily committed to respond to enemy nuclear

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strikes wherever they may be made. At the same time, I have indicated the need for substantial non-nuclear forces within the Alliance to deal with situations where a nuclear response may be inappropriate or simply not believable. Throughout I have emphasized that we in the Alliance all need each other.

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I want to remind you also that the security provided by military strength is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the achievement of our foreign policy goals, including our goals in the field of arms control and disarmament. Military security provides a base on which we can build Free World strength through the economic advances and political reforms which are the object of the President's programs, like the Alliance for Progress and the Trade Expansion legislation. Only in a peaceful world can we give full scope to the individual potential, which is for us the ultimate value.

A distinguished European visited the United States last month as a guest of the President. Andre Malraux, French Minister of State for Cultural Affairs, is an eminent novelist and critic. He led an archaeological expedition to Cambodia and fought in the Spanish Civil War and the French Resistance Movement. Malraux paid a moving tribute to our nation when he said: "The only nation that has waged war but not worshipped it, that has won the greatest power in the world but not sought it, that has wrought the greatest weapon of death but has not wished to wield it... May it inspire men with dreams worthy of its action."

The community of learning to which you have been admitted carries with it great privileges. It also carries great responsibilities. And perhaps the greatest of these is to help ensure the wise use of our national power.

Let me paraphrase Malraux: May your dreams be worthy of action and your actions be shaped by your dreams.

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